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International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation
Almaty, Kazakhstan
28 and 29 August 2003

Almaty Declaration

We, the Governments participating in the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation in Almaty in August 2003,

Having gathered to address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and to establish a new global framework for transit transport cooperation for landlocked and transit developing countries, taking into account the interests of both landlocked and transit developing countries,

Recalling the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[1] in which heads of States and Governments recognized the special needs and problems of the landlocked developing countries and urged both bilateral and multilateral donors to increase financial and technical assistance to this group of countries to meet their special development needs and to help them overcome the impediments of geography by improving their transit transport systems,

Having resolved to create an environment, at the national and global levels alike, that is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty,

Having adopted the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries,

Declare that:

1. *We believe* that increased trade is essential for the economic growth and sustainable development of developing countries. However, the participation of landlocked and transit developing countries in international trade is not as significant as it could be.

[1] General Assembly resolution 55/2.

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2. *We recognize* that a major reason for the marginalization of landlocked developing countries from the global trading system is high trade transaction costs. Trade and transport are inextricably linked. Transport costs are a key determinant of international trade competitiveness.

3. *We commit* to work towards minimizing the current marginalization and enhancing the beneficial integration of landlocked developing countries into the global economy. To this end, *we will strive* to establish efficient transit transport systems in both landlocked and transit developing countries.

4. *We believe* that transit transport cooperation is of considerable mutual benefit to both landlocked and transit developing countries. *We are aware* that the transit countries concerned are themselves developing countries, often of broadly similar economic structure and beset by similar scarcity of resources as the landlocked developing countries.

5. *We reaffirm* the right of access of landlocked countries to and from the sea and freedom of transit through the territory of transit countries by all means of transport, in accordance with applicable rules of international law.

6. *We also reaffirm* that transit countries, in the exercise of their full sovereignty over their territory, have the right to take all measures necessary to ensure that the rights and facilities provided for landlocked countries in no way infringe upon their legitimate interests.

7. *We recognize* that the primary responsibility for establishing effective transit systems rests with the landlocked and transit developing countries. *We encourage* them to implement measures to further strengthen their cooperative and collaborative efforts to address transit transport issues by improving the physical infrastructure and non-physical aspects of transit transport systems and, in this respect, *we emphasize* the role of South-South cooperation.

8. *We emphasize* the need for a substantial increase in official development assistance and other resources in the mobilization of financial and technical assistance from all sources and existing mechanisms, including the private sector. *We encourage* donor countries and multilateral financial and development institutions to continue their efforts to ensure effective implementation of the commitments reached in the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development,[2] in particular its paragraphs 41 to 43, with the aim of providing landlocked and transit developing countries with the appropriate financial and technical assistance in the form of grants and/or loans on the most concessional terms possible for the needs identified in the Almaty Programme of Action.

9. *We also emphasize* that the private sector, as a service provider and as user of transit system services, is an important stakeholder in society and should be a main contributor to the development of infrastructure and productive capacity in both landlocked and transit developing countries.

10. *We note* the important role that the simplification, streamlining and standardization of transit procedures and documentation and the application of information technologies have played in enhancing the efficiency of transit systems,

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[2] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

and call upon relevant entities of the United Nations and other international organizations, including the World Bank, the regional commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the World Customs Organization and regional economic integration organizations, to continue to assist, upon request, landlocked and transit developing countries in those areas, in accordance with their respective mandates.

11. *We recall* the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization,[3] which recognized the case for expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit, and the need for enhanced technical assistance and capacity-building in this area. We also recall the decision in the same Declaration that the World Trade Organization would address issues related to the trade of small, vulnerable economies and their full integration in the multilateral trading system.

12. *We recognize* that excessive transport costs create a major effective barrier to foreign markets. In this regard, *we note* the request of landlocked developing countries that the current negotiations on market access for agricultural and non-agricultural goods should consider giving particular attention to products of special interest to landlocked developing countries.

13. *We recognize* the importance of enhanced and predictable access to all markets for the exports of developing countries, including landlocked and transit developing countries. In accordance with the commitments contained in the Doha Ministerial Declaration, in particular its paragraphs 13 and 16, and the rules of the World Trade Organization, current negotiations should give full attention to the needs and interests of developing countries, including landlocked and transit developing countries.

14. *We reaffirm* our commitment to facilitate the further development of landlocked developing countries. The establishment of efficient transit transport systems and the integration of landlocked developing countries into the global economy will be achieved through genuine partnerships between landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners at the national, bilateral, subregional, regional and global levels.

15. *We emphasize* the critical importance of the effective implementation of and regular follow-up to the Almaty Programme of Action, and *we commit* ourselves to this end. *We request* the United Nations High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to ensure that the Conference is effectively followed up, within his mandate and in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

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[3] A/C.2/56/7, annex.